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RIGHTS OF PERSONS BELONGING TO NATIONAL OR ETHNIC, RELIGIOUS AND LINGUISTIC MINORITIES

Written statement submitted by the Society of Threatened Peoples, a non-governmental organization in consultative status (category II) and the International Association of Educators for World Peace, a non-governmental organization on the Roster

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV).

[2 February 1995]

The situation in Tibet

1. Recently, incidents in Tibet caused Tibetans to recall the days of the Cultural Revolution, which officially began on 28 August 1966 in the Tibetan capital, Lhasa. At the time, Lhasa was full of Red Guard factions fighting one another. People are once again being told that religion is poison and that its practice needs to be reformed for the good of the socialist system. Initial desecrations and destructions of monasteries, nunneries and temples had already occurred in the years subsequent to the Chinese invasion of Tibet, and continued during the Cultural Revolution.

2. The Special Rapporteur on religious intolerance in his report (E/CN.4/1994/79) last year stated: "Whereas as recently as 1959, there were some 6,250 monasteries and temples housing more than 592,500 monks and nuns, the following years were reportedly marked by considerable destruction wrought particularly between 1955 and 1961 and, to a lesser extent, during the Cultural Revolution."

Photographs of the Dalai Lama banned

3. Similar to the role of the Red Guards during the Cultural Revolution, today the Chinese security forces are playing a major role in implementing government policies aimed at destroying the cultural, religious and national identity of the Tibetan people. New reports received by our organization say that the Chinese authorities recently issued an order declaring it illegal for Tibetans to put a photograph of the Dalai Lama on altars in monasteries or in homes. Tibetan cadres and functionaries of the Communist Party (CP) were instructed by their respective offices and departments to remove all photographs of the Dalai Lama from their homes and offices. Tibetans in these two categories of the Party were specifically targeted by the new ban imposed on photographs of the Dalai Lama. This was clear when the Chinese security forces ransacked the Tibetan Party members' homes and confiscated all photographs of the Tibetan leader.

4. In November 1994, the situation worsened as the Chinese authorities ruthlessly implemented the new control over religion. People involved in the business of selling photos of the Dalai Lama and other religious pictures were told to close down their shops. An official announcement was also issued to all departments and offices prohibiting Tibetans from displaying photographs of the Tibetan leader.

5. Article 88 of the Constitution of the People's Republic of China guarantees freedom of religious belief. It further states that "the People's State holds that the question of religious belief is a private matter; belief or non-belief in religion relates to the personal freedom of an individual".

Party members told to denounce religion

6. However, at a meeting of CP members in June 1994, the following directives were read from an internally circulated document of the government of the so-called "Tibet Autonomous Region" (TAR):

> "Communists are complete atheists - a communist fighter, to whatever nationality he may belong, should be a complete atheist.
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> "The reason why communists do not believe in any religion is that the communist world outlook is basically opposed to the religious world outlook. The communist world outlook is Marxist-Leninist dialectical materialism, while the religious world outlook is completely different in that all religions are idealistic.
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> "But religion obstructs the implementation of the Party's general line for socialist construction and restricts the growth of communist thought of the labouring people. Because of its reactionary nature, religion is most likely to be used by enemies of the people to undermine socialist construction and the development of various nationalities in the motherland.
>
> "The heavy religious burden imposed on the people prevents them from developing production and improving their living standards.

"It spreads religious prejudice and seeks to undermine the unity of the motherland and the solidarity of the various nationalities.

"Since religion is harmful to the socialist construction of the motherland, it will inevitably prove harmful to the progress and development of the minority nationalities. Therefore, Party members of national minorities should denounce religion for the good of the socialist motherland."

Buddhist liturgical practices restricted

7. The traditional Tibetan Buddhist liturgical practice is to invite monks to one's home to recite religious texts at least once every year. Some of the litany lasts several days; others may last seven weeks, for example, in the case of a deceased. However, such practices by Tibetans who are residing in official residences or compounds are forbidden under the new restrictions on religious liberties.

8. The reason for such forms of restriction is that the Chinese authorities want all Tibetan Party members to be atheists, or at least appear to be so. For instance, Party members are now barred from entering temples and monasteries. In 1990, local Tibetans were banned from inviting monks or nuns to perform the litany at their homes. They were told to go to the monasteries/nunneries to avail themselves of such services. Furthermore, high learned monks' liturgical services are restricted even within the monasteries. The monks must seek the permission of the Religious Affairs Bureau of the TAR to preach in the monasteries. Preaching in public places or neighbourhood compounds is absolutely prohibited. The Democratic Management Committee (DMC), appointed by the Chinese authorities, collaborating with Work Unit Teams manages the administration of the monasteries and nunneries.

Political control of monasteries/nunneries tightens

9. A document issued on 30 March 1994 by the TAR Commission for Politics and Law and the Lhasa City Bureau Commission for Politics and Law instructs the Municipal United Front, the Religious Affairs Bureau and district authorities to closely monitor and document the religious activities in their areas. This document states:

"How many monasteries, hermits and small temples are there in the villages under the district jurisdiction? What are the names and locations of the monasteries, to be more precise, how many monasteries and nunneries are there? How many of them have government permission to operate? How many of them have been renovated or newly constructed without government permission? Do they house the government-allocated number of monks and nuns? How many monks and nuns are there currently in the district? Were they ever involved in the 1959 reactionary revolt or the 1987 separatist activities? How many times were they involved and what number of people participated? How many people have been detained, sentenced, sent to the 'Reform through Labour' programme, escaped and/or are under investigation? What is the most obvious situation in the monastery and what is the cause of it? How many reincarnate Lamas have been appointed and are they coming from the outside? Are they followers

of the separatist movement? Are they using religion as an excuse to be involved in separatist activities? Are these incarnate Lamas meddling in the administration, law and order, and education of the community?"

Education for Tibetan children deliberately obstructed

10. Religious teaching and prayers are not allowed in primary schools and institutions of higher learning in Tibet, nor is religious history part of the syllabus. It is said that the minds of the students should not be corrupted by "blind faith". These official restrictions have led many Tibetans in Tibet to send their children to India in order to receive a solid Tibetan and modern education, free from Chinese communist ideological influence.

11. On 26 June 1994, a source from Lhasa reported that Tibetans who are cadres or CP members were questioned about their intentions to send their children to schools in India. On 19 October 1994, the Chinese authorities in Lhasa instructed all Tibetan CP members and cadres to bring their children back from India and enrol them in schools of the TAR. This decision of the Chinese authorities also mentioned punitive measures like expulsion from the Party and denial of salary raises for parents who failed to comply with the directives. It was noted that the concerned child's resident card would be revoked and parents would face severe retribution if they did not bring their children back promptly.

12. The latest Chinese announcement appears to have been the consequence of a document issued at the Third Work Forum on Tibet Conference held in Beijing from 20 to 23 July 1994. Some top Chinese leaders participated in it. Mr. Radi, deputy secretary of the CP Committee 4th TAR Committee and chairman of the TAR's 6th People's Congress Standing Committee, is known to have initiated the drafting of the document. A reliable source informed the Tibetan government in exile that the main contents of the document involved the initiation of a campaign to ban pictures of the Dalai Lama and the issuing of an order according to which Tibetan CP members and cadres must take their children out of school in India and bring them back to TAR schools.

Conclusion

13. It is the opinion of the International Association of Educators for World Peace and the Society of Threatened Peoples, that the Chinese authorities consider religion an instrument that bolsters unity among Tibetans. They perceive this instrument to be the force behind the solidarity of the Tibetan people. Therefore, the Chinese authorities want to shatter it. There is little doubt about this if we carefully review the recent actions of the Chinese authorities.

14. The Commission on Human Rights should note that freedom of religion is something the Chinese authorities promulgated for the international community as a face-saving device in order to deny the ongoing religious persecution in Tibet. Under cover of constitutionally guaranteed religious freedom, the Chinese authorities continue to wage an undeclared war against the Tibetan people in order to suppress Tibetan aspirations.